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Matthias Thaden und Alexander Praetz

Turbofolk reconsidered

Some thoughts on migration and the appropriation of music in early 1990s Berlin

Abstract

This paper's aim is to shed a light on the emergence, meanings and contexts of early 1990s turbofolk. While this music-style has been exhaustively investigated with regard to Yugoslavia and Serbia, its appropriation by Yugoslav labour migrants has hitherto been no subject of particular interest. Departing from this research gap this paper focuses on "Ex-Yugoslav" evening entertainment and music venues in Berlin and the role turbofolk possessed. We hope to contribute to the ongoing research on this music relying on insights we gained from our fieldwork and the interviews conducted in early and mid-2013. After criticizing some suggestions that have been made regarding the construction of group belongings by applying a dichotomous logic with turbofolk representing the supposedly "inferior", this approach could serve to investigate the interplay between music and the making of everyday social boundaries. Drawing on the gathered interview material we, beyond merely confirming ethnic and national segmentations, suggest the emergence of new actors and the increase of private initiatives and regional solidarity to be of major importance for negotiating belongings. In that regard, turbofolk events – far from being an unambiguous signifier of group loyalty – were indeed capable to serve as a context that bridged both national as well as social cleavages.

Introduction

The cultural life of migrants from the former Yugoslavia is a subject area that so far has remained to be widely under-researched. Trying to make a first attempt to contribute to filling this gap, this paper aims to trace the connections between musical and entertainment events taking place in Berlin from the early to the mid-1990s and the (re-)definitions of Yugoslav migrant communities. In this respect, our main goal is to expand approaches that have dealt with Yugoslav citizens outside Yugoslavia by considering them first of all as being subject to propaganda from the "homeland"¹ or as the ones accounting for radicalization due to *long-distance-nationalism*.² Contrary to the treatment of cultural events in Berlin and their meanings as mere *reflections* of developments within Yugoslavia, we argue that the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a shift in representations of belonging that was also mediated and negotiated through cultural production taking place locally. Attempting to provide insights into processes of belonging we aim to present a more multifaceted picture of former Yugoslav music production that does not preclude the migrant's

¹ Cf. Novinščak, Karolina (2008): From „Yugoslav Gastarbeiter“ to „Diaspora-Croats“. Policies and Attitudes toward Emigration in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia. In: Caruso, Clelia; Raphael, Lutz (eds.): Postwar Mediterranean Migration to Western Europe. Legal and Political Frameworks, Sociability and Memory Cultures. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, pp. 125-143.

² One of the most lucid examples of this kind has certainly been the journalistic account given by Hockenos. Cf. Hockenos, Paul (2003): Homeland Calling. Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

experiences. By rather taking them as a point of departure we hope to contribute to recent efforts in overcoming a national and cultural “container-thinking”.³

Although the body of scholarship on cultural life of Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* in the Federal Republic of Germany as well as on the involved identity politics has remained somewhat thin, we could base our research⁴ mostly on insights that have been recently put forward by Vladimir Ivanović and Nikola Baković.⁵ Both of whom dealt with efforts on behalf of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia to provide means of “guest worker” information. We will additionally give a brief presentation of Yugoslav migration to Germany and the cultural landscape it generated in West Berlin. The paper’s principal share, however, will be devoted to the shifts that we expect to have occurred during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Based on the overall issue of this project it will furthermore be discussed whether and how institutions and actors organizing cultural life were affected by the escalating political situation in Yugoslavia and whether and how group belonging was negotiated by music consumption and its staging. In this respect, our particular aim is to scrutinize how the emerging turbofolk-music from Yugoslavia was appropriated in Berlin and whether it was charged with particular meanings.⁶ For this purpose we conducted several narrative interviews with people born in Yugoslavia living in Berlin at that time. Throughout these interviews we mostly tried to get a hold on the various intersections between music and belonging by primarily probing into subject areas we assumed to be of importance.

Concurrently this paper aims to combine our previous research interests.⁷ In the following, we shall try to bring together our findings by presenting aspects of the impact and the appropriation of turbofolk-music in Berlin.

³ For a critique from a global historians’ perspective, see: Conrad, Sebastian; Eckert, Andreas (2007): *Globalgeschichte, Globalisierung, multiple Modernen. Zur Geschichtsschreibung der modernen Welt*. In: Conrad, Sebastian; Eckert, Andreas; Freitag, Ulrike (eds.): *Globalgeschichte. Theorien, Ansätze, Themen*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, pp. 7–49; pp. 35–37.

⁴ A significant confinement is to be made here with regard to our language-skills: We were both studying the Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian language for some six months only. This is why literature from the former Yugoslavia has, for the most part, not been sufficiently incorporated.

⁵ Ivanović, Vladimir (2012): *Geburstag pišeš normalno. Jugoslovenski gastarbajteri u SR Nemačkoj i Austriji, 1965–1973*. Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju; Baković, Nikola (2012): *Socialist “Oasis” in a Capitalist “Desert”. Yugoslav State Propaganda for Economic Emigrants in FR Germany (1966–1975)*: M.A.-Diss. Budapest: CEU; available online at http://etd.ceu.hu/2012/Baković_nikola.pdf, accessed July 8, 2013.

⁶ We are indebted to Archer who recently called for researching turbofolk and its impact on communities outside Yugoslavia. Cf. Archer, Rory (2012): *Assessing Turbofolk Controversies. Popular Music between the Nation and the Balkans*. In: *Southeastern Europe* 36, pp. 178–207, here: p. 200.

⁷ Alexander Praetz has been concerned with the emergence of “turbofolk” in former Yugoslavia, thereby tackling a rather simple minded notion of this music as being a mere feature of a Serbian nationalist political landscape. Instead, he focused on contested meanings and the discourse that accompanied this particular genre both within as well as beyond Serbia. Matthias Thaden, for his part, was preoccupied with identity politics of the Croatian Catholic Mission in Berlin. He demonstrated that the definition of what it actually meant to be “Croatian” was neither static nor shared, but subject to articulation struggles that involved numerous actors; see Thaden in this issue. Most essays published in the thematic part of this issue of *Südosteuropäische Hefte* were part of the research project “Repräsentationen des sozialistischen Jugoslawien im Umbruch [Changing Representations of Socialist Yugoslavia]”.

Turbofolk and its scientific assessments

Research within humanities on the Yugoslav disintegration process of the early 1990s have dealt with the social processes of change within the (post-)Yugoslav states regarding the social, economic, political as well as the popular-cultural area. In this latter area it was mainly preoccupied with the question about the significance of cultural phenomena for the establishment of nationalism. In doing so, the advent of the so-called turbofolk played a quite decisive role, which as a musical genre originated in the early 1990s and is perceived to have dominated the field of popular-culture in the following period. What is special about the music of turbofolk is its hybrid content mixing various genres like folk, house, dance and hip hop as well as often mentioned elements of “oriental music”. The music is usually performed by a singer and as an additional means of turbofolk, the accordion is usually supposed to play a central role.⁸

Starting from Eric D. Gordy’s fieldwork in Belgrade during the second half of the 1990s turbofolk has been described as a musical phenomenon, which has promoted Serbian nationalism at a cultural level. Gordy argued that turbofolk was deliberately promoted as part of the destruction of alternative structures in the field of politics, culture and society by the new Serbian state elite and ascended through this support as the cultural mainstream.⁹ Gordy especially described the connection between turbofolk and Serbian nationalism with respect to the interdependence between new actors in Serbian politics – which Gordy understands to have constituted for the new elite – and the stars of the music genre. Most clearly indicating this relation, it is the wedding between Arkan Ražnatović and Svetlana Ceca Veličković that scholars refer to in abundance, describing it as a mass media event symbolizing the connection between politics, media and show business within Serbia.¹⁰ Another key point in Gordy’s work is the alleged conflict between urban culture and rural culture within Serbia, which in his view, was reflected in the suppression of rock music and the rise of turbofolk as a popular music genre. He perceives rock music to have been a symbol of cosmopolitan cultural faction that, in turn, reflected a pluralistic attitude on part of the urban population while turbofolk. On the other hand, it is portrayed as a cultural

⁸ However, this instrument that is usually considered distinctive, according to Baker, constantly diminished in the wake of time. Cf. Baker, Catherine (2007): The concept of turbofolk in Croatia: inclusion/exclusion in the construction of national musical identity. In: Baker, Catherine; Gerry, Christopher J.; Madaj, Barbara; Mellish, Liz; Nahodilová, Jana (eds.): Nation in formation: inclusion and exclusion in central and eastern Europe. London: School of Slavonic & Eastern European Studies, p. 7. See also: Praetz, Alexander (2013): Turbo-Folk: Vom pop-kulturellen Symbol der “Ära Milosevic” zum “pan-balkanischen” Identitätsstifter? Berlin: Forschungsprojekt „Repräsentationen des sozialistischen Jugoslawien im Umbruch“ (Working Papers, 3), available online at <http://yurepraesentationenimumbruch.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/wp-praetz.pdf>, accessed September 26, 2013, pp. 3–8; Kronja, Ivana (2004b): Turbo Folk and Dance Music in 1990s Serbia. Media, Ideology and the Production of Spectacle. In: *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 22, pp. 103–114, here: p.103.

⁹ cf. Gordy, Eric D. (1999): *The Culture of Power in Serbia. Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 104–105.

¹⁰ Cf. Gordy (1999), pp. 137–138; Galijaš, Armina (2011): Musik als Spiegel politischer Einstellung. Turbofolk vs. Rock. In: Newerkla, Stefan; Poljakov, Fedor B.; Schmitt, Oliver Jens (eds.): *Das politische Lied in Ost- und Südosteuropa*. Unter Mitarbeit von Hansfrieder Vogel und Armina Galijaš, Münster: LIT Verlag, pp. 273–293; see also: Monroe, Alexei (2000): Balkan Hardcore. Pop culture and paramilitarism. In: *Central Europe Review* 2, available online at <http://ce-review.org/00/24/monroe24.html>, accessed July 25, 2013; Hudson, Robert (2007): Popular Music, Tradition and Serbian Nationalism. In: Biddle, Ian; Knights, Vanessa (eds.): *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location*. Aldershot: Palgrave, pp. 161–178, p. 174.

product of the rural population above all representing backwardness. He heavily draws on Andrei Simić's argument who considered the "peasant urbanites" as having constituted "a hybrid class halfway on the road from village to city" prone to *Novokomponovana Narodna Muzika* (Newly Composed Folk Music – NCFM) as opposed to "real urbanites", who Simić primarily associated with jazz and rock-music.¹¹ In this sense, Gordy considers turbofolk to be a direct successor of NCFM. While this view is somewhat difficult to assess for it is disputable on which aspects one should focus when referring to the musical development¹² it is to be found not only in Gordy's work. Turbofolk – similarly to NCFM – is for the most part regarded as an inferior cultural phenomenon as opposed to "higher" (i.e. "western") musical culture like rock music.¹³ Academic criticism of turbo folk is complemented by the rejection of the music on the part of conservative representatives of the Serbian state elite who understand turbofolk as an attack to traditional "Serbian culture" therefore rejecting the music. As an example Zoran Đokić may be mentioned, ultra-nationalist and owner of "Radio Ponos". He labelled this music as "un-Serbian" because of its alleged "Islamic sounds" and therefore prohibited turbofolk from being played in his program.¹⁴ This example suggests that it makes little sense to entirely follow Gordy's arguments by making a clear-cut division thus assigning turbofolk and its listeners to the nationalist site while considering those rather sceptical towards turbofolk as "anti-nationalists".¹⁵ Furthermore, some of Yugoslavia's allegedly "cosmopolitan" rockers proved to be rather nationalistic, which was most notably true for Bora Đorđević, singer of the band "Riblja Čorba", who had declared himself a *Četnik*.¹⁶ Although Gordy certainly put forward an important work providing for the basis of further discussions on the topic, some of the above mentioned arguments must be considered questionable.

Ivana Kronja, for her part, also continuously refers to the close connection between turbofolk and Serbian nationalism. She describes turbofolk as a phenomenon reflecting the rise of a new Serbian elite that included mainly war profiteers from the criminal milieu on a

¹¹ Simić, Andrei (1978): Commercial Folk Music in Yugoslavia. Idealization and Reality. In: Journal of the Association of Graduate Dance Ethnologists, UCLA 2, quoted in: Gordy (1999), p. 107.

¹² In fact, most scholars draw this lineage, mostly with regard to official positions both towards NKFM as well as towards turbofolk. Lots of authors argue that from the mid-1980s Yugoslavia witnessed an inversion of legitimate culture as a result of economic hardship and also due to the rise of television as a mass-medium. Cf. Vidić Rasmussen, Ljerka (1996): The Southern Wind of Change. Style and the Politics of Identity in Prewar Yugoslavia. In: Slobin, Mark (ed.): Retuning Culture. Musical Change in Central and Eastern Europe. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 99–116; Ceribašić, Naila; Hofman, Ana; Vidić Rasmussen, Ljerka (2008): Post-Yugoslavian Ethnomusicologies in Dialogue. In: Yearbook for Traditional Music 40, pp. 33–45, here: pp. 40–41; Vidić Rasmussen, Ljerka (2007): Bosnian and Serbian Popular Music in the 1990s. Divergent Paths, Conflicting Meanings and Shared Sentiments. In: Buchanan, Donna A. (ed.): Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene. Music, Image, and Regional Political Discourse. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, pp. 57–94, here: p. 58; Fischer, Wladimir (2005): A Polyphony of Belongings. (Turbo) Folk, Power and Migrants. In: Markovic, Tanja; Mikic, Vesna (eds.): Music and Networking. Belgrade: Faculty of Music, pp. 58–71, here: pp. 64–65.

¹³ This has most concisely been described by Grujić. Cf. Grujić, Marija (2009): Community and the Popular: Women, Nation and Turbofolk in Post-Yugoslav Serbia, PhD-Diss. Budapest: CEU, available online at <http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2011/gphgrm01.pdf>, accessed July 8, 2013, pp. 49–50.

¹⁴ Cf. Archer, Rory (2012), p. 190.

¹⁵ See Tomić in this issue: Tomić, Đorđe (2014): All that Folk. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen und Repräsentationen der Folk-Musik im (post-) jugoslawischen Raum. In: Südosteuropäische Hefte 3 (1), pp. 131–162.

¹⁶ Baker, Catherine (2010): Sounds of the Borderland. Popular Music, War and Nationalism in Croatia since 1991. Adlershot: Ashgate, p. 182.

popular-cultural level.¹⁷ In this sense turbofolk by means of mass media dissemination contributed to the legitimacy of criminal structures as well as to the emergence of “militarism” and “patriotism” within Serbian society. According to Kronja and a considerable amount of her adherents turbofolk represents a sort of “kitsch folk”, thus demonstrating the same negative attitude towards the actors and the audience throughout her work as Gordy did. According to her, and again bearing close resemblance to Gordy, turbofolk can be considered a paragon of a “misguided culture”.¹⁸ Marija Grujić rightly criticizes Kronja’s and Gordy’s approach to turbofolk as a phenomenon that has been deliberately promoted by the Serbian state elite in the 1990s¹⁹ and thereby contributed to the emergence of Serbian nationalism among the rural population which, in turn, brought it to the cities.²⁰ Although the music’s content cannot be labelled nationalist as such,²¹ it was rather the simple messages and the context of turbofolk songs that according to Sonja Vogel linked them to 1990s nationalist ideology. In her opinion, the music functioned as a mediator between the public and private sphere and was therefore able to transport significant meanings of group affiliations like the belonging to the Serbian nation.²² Whether turbofolk indeed facilitated nationalism cannot be answered exhaustively with regard to prior research literature. This is mainly due to the fact that the music’s *reception* has so far not sufficiently been researched as those considered to be its fans and followers have largely been muted.²³

Yet the acquisition of Gordy’s and Kronja’s central theses in later research projects²⁴ and newspaper articles²⁵ suggest that turbofolk is still primarily represented as a phenomenon specific for Serbia.²⁶ A different perspective and an important impulse for further explorations of turbofolk as a cultural phenomenon have been put forward by Catherine Baker. By suggesting turbofolk not primarily to constitute less “a concrete definition of a genre, but rather a conceptual category”²⁷, Baker draws on Anthony Cohen’s insights on “boundary generating symbols” adapting turbofolk to his theory for she considers this music to be important for groups’ distinction and their respective sustaining.²⁸ In her research

¹⁷ Cf. Kronja (2004b), p. 103.

¹⁸ cf. *ibid.* pp. 103–106.

¹⁹ Quite contrarily, as Đurković has been told by an important actor of the then scene, there was almost no public support for music back then. Cf. Đurković, Miša (2002): *Ideologizacija turbo-folka*. In: *Kultura: časopis za teoriju i socio-logiju kulture i medija* 102, pp. 19–33, here: p. 26.

²⁰ cf. Grujić (2012), p. 48.

²¹ cf. Galijaš (2011), pp. 273–293.

²² Vogel, Sonja (2010): *Turbofolk im ehemaligen Jugoslawien. Zwischen identitärer Regression und Grenzüberschreitung*. M.A.-Diss. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, p. 56.

²³ This is particularly unfortunate with regard to the parts devoted to turbofolk within Baker’s comprehensive study devoted to popular music in Croatia throughout the 1990s. Cf. Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland*, see particularly pp. 137–145.

²⁴ Hudson, Robert (2003): *Songs of seduction: popular music and Serbian nationalism*. In: *Patterns of Prejudice* 37, pp. 157–176; Hudson, *Popular Music, Tradition and Serbian Nationalism*, pp. 151–178; Galijaš (2011), pp. 273–293.

²⁵ See: Itano, Nicole (2008): *Turbofolk music is the sound of Serbia feeling Sorry for itself*. In: *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 5th, available online at <http://csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2008/0505/p20s01-woeu.html>, accessed July 18, 2013.

²⁶ Vogel, Sonja (2010): *Ceca steht für Potenz, Reichtum, Heterosexualität*. In: *Die Welt*, 05.10.2010, available online at <http://welt.de/kultur/musik/article10072235/Ceca-steht-fuer-Potenz-Reichtum-Heterosexualitaet.html>, accessed July 18, 2013.

²⁷ Baker (2007), p. 1.

²⁸ Baker, Catherine (2006): *The Politics of Performance. Transnationalism and its Limits in Former Yugoslav Popular Music, 1999–2004*. In: *Ethnopolitics* 5, pp. 275–293, here: p. 279.

Baker shows that turbofolk can be understood not only as a cultural phenomenon within Serbia, but that it also possesses significance in neighbouring Croatia where it carried specific and space-dependent meanings, thus being part of the Croatian popular culture as well.²⁹ Baker takes up the debate on the issue from a broader perspective and helps to understand turbofolk not as a “static canon but [as] a dynamic field”, within which changes depend on the context.³⁰ Subsequent works, including those by Rory Archer and Uros Cvorovic, have employed these perspectives on turbofolk and helped to appreciate it as a transnational cultural phenomenon.³¹ Cvorovic considers turbofolk a musical phenomenon that already during the 1990s has enjoyed distribution in all former Yugoslav republics, thereby tackling the narrow-mindedness of understanding turbofolk to have been an exclusively Serbian cultural phenomenon.³² In order to highlight the importance turbofolk possessed throughout all former Yugoslav republics Zala Volčič and Karmen Erjavec conducted interviews on Ceca’s popularity in Slovenia, Croatia, Kosovo, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia. Within the study they revealed that Ceca is primarily seen as a prototype of “a strong lady” as well as a “symbol which unites the Balkans”.³³ Dealing with turbofolk, Archer, on his part, identified discourses of balkanism and contested narratives of belonging. According to him, turbofolk and the Balkans – being inevitably intertwined – are both assigned with the same negative stereotypes (i.e. backward, uncivilized, violence, barbarity etc.).³⁴ Another aspect against an exclusively Serbian perspective on turbofolk might be derived from the fact that there are music styles in surrounding countries actually enjoying very similar reputation in their respective societies, such as *Manele* (Romania), *Chalga* (Bulgaria), *Arabesk* (Turkey) and *Muzika Popullore* (Albania).³⁵

Transnational perspectives might help to understand turbo folk not just as an outcome of Serbian society, thus creating an opportunity to appreciate it as a European,³⁶ or even as a global³⁷ cultural phenomenon, as was suggested by Vogel in her concluding remarks.³⁸ Taking into consideration turbofolk’s hybrid nature and the continual changes the music underwent, as has been rightly emphasized by Wladimir Fischer, we must not attribute one *single* and *explicit* meaning to the “symbol of turbofolk”.³⁹ Therefore and based on these

²⁹ cf. Baker (2007), pp. 1–17

³⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

³¹ cf. Cvorovic, Uros (2012): Remember the Nineties? Turbofolk as the Vanishing Mediator of Nationalism. In: Cultural Politics 8, pp. 121–137; Archer, Rory (2009): “Paint Me Black and Gold and Put Me in a Frame”. Turbofolk and Balkanist Discourse in (post-) Yugoslav Cultural Space. M.A. Thesis. Budapest: CEU, available online at http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2009/archer_rory.pdf, last access July 8, 2013.

³² cf. Cvorovic (2012), p. 123. See also his recently published exhaustive study: Cvorovic, Uros (2014): Turbo-folk Music and Cultural Representations of National Identity in Former Yugoslavia. Adlershot: Ashgate.

³³ Volčič, Zala; Erjavec, Karmen (2011): Constructing Transnational Divas Productions of Balkan Turbo-Folk Music. In: Sarma Hegde, Radha (ed.): Circuits of Visibility. Gender and Transnational Media Cultures. New York: NYU Press, pp. 35–51, here: pp. 44–46.

³⁴ Archer (2009), pp. 26–29.

³⁵ On this issue, see: Gehl, Katerina (2012): Jugendkultur und Einstellung Jugendlicher zu „Europa“ im heutigen Bulgarien. In: Südosteuropa Mitteilungen 52, pp. 32–45; Archer (2012), p. 190.

³⁶ Cf. Schubert, Gabriella (2012): Frieden, Bruder, Frieden! Musikalische Botschaften aus Südosteuropa gestern und heute. In: Zeitschrift für Balkanologie 48, pp. 110–128, here: p. 126.

³⁷ Dimitrijević, Branislav (2002): Global Turbofolk. In: NIN, 20.06.2002, available online at <http://ex-yupress.com/nin/nin139.html>, accessed September 19, 2013.

³⁸ Vogel (2010), p. 84.

³⁹ Fischer (2005), p. 66.

insights, we should probe into a more multi-layered approach when addressing the issue of turbofolk.

Similar to what Archer, Fischer as well as Ljerka Vidić-Rasmussen claimed, it was above all the guest workers and their role as cultural mediators that appear to a promising field of investigation.⁴⁰ As their role with regard to the popularity of turbofolk has also often been mentioned by persons we have talked to both in Belgrade and Pirot prior to our actual research,⁴¹ this seems to be particularly true with respect to turbofolk's appropriation within a different spatial context we in the following shall attempt to examine turbofolk in the 1990s' Berlin. The central question in this case will be whether turbo folk music played a role and whether it was of any importance concerning social and cultural dynamics in early 1990s Berlin.

Migration from Yugoslavia to Berlin. Figures, actors and institutions from 1968 until the early 1990s

In the following sections it will be analyzed how the developments within Yugoslavia were translated in Germany thereby investigating their "musical appropriation" abroad. Firstly, however, it seems necessary to address the topic of various actors' cultural politics with special attention to West Berlin. Furthermore, we shall delineate some of the ingrained narratives regarding guest workers and their alleged cultural affiliations arguing that they tend to bear semblance to dichotomous views that were sketched throughout the last chapter. They furthermore seem to enjoy increased popularity when comparisons are drawn between the ideal-typical "guest workers" and "refugees".

Yugoslav citizens in West-Berlin: Aspects of cultural life until the late 1980s

Scientific approaches to Yugoslav migration to Germany have long been concerned with identifying their causes and effects on a rather macroeconomic level. Thus, both qualitative research probing into the transnational realities on the ground as well as everyday identity politics and their actors have largely remained blank spots. We will portray efforts to articulate identity politics for Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* in West Berlin and ask how it was pursued with regard to organized cultural activities.⁴²

⁴⁰ cf. Vidić-Rasmussen (1996); Fischer (2005); Archer (2009).

⁴¹ These interviews have been conducted within the framework of an excursion to the borderland between Bulgaria and Serbia organized by Hannes Grandits and Nenad Stefanov from the Chair for Southeastern European History at Humboldt University Berlin.

⁴² At this juncture, it is important to keep in mind that neither the Yugoslav state nor institutions such as the Croatian Catholic Mission merely *represented* already existing groups. They were rather actively seeking to imagine them by offering an interpretation of social reality. This articulation of meaning must be situated within a social field that exhibits numerous actors competing on the fixation of collective identities most likely articulated by ethnic entrepreneurs who necessarily depend on clear-cut boundaries and thus aim for maintaining them. We are referring to insights gained from deconstructivist strands within discourse theory rejecting the idea of a subject's positively definable inner core. Rather, for authors such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe it is the process of exclusion that, in turn, constitutes inner coherence. See: Torfing, Jakob (1999): *New Theories of Discourse*: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 39–40, here: p. 124. On the ethnic formatting of the social, see: Brubaker, Rogers (2004): *Ethnicity without groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 16, 19.

Not quite meeting the number of those coming to southern German cities, Yugoslav migrants, however, constituted a significant part of West Berlin's population from the early 1970s onwards. As implied by the statistics that have been publicized by the state's statistical office their number between 1974 and 1987 roughly amounted to 29.000-31.000 persons, whereas their share of Berlin's entire amount of persons holding a non-German passport temporarily diminished from approx. 16% until the year 1978 to a fairly stable 11-12% from the early 1980s to 1991.⁴³ Notwithstanding that it proves rather difficult to assess reliable numbers of Yugoslav guest workers regarding their regional background Srećko Lipovčan assumed a majority of them to have originated in southern Dalmatia and western and northern Bosnia, i.e. from agricultural areas mainly populated by Croats.⁴⁴ In this respect, it comes as no surprise that it was the Croatian Catholic Mission who put great efforts both into pursuing identity politics⁴⁵ as well as into providing extensive means of cultural activities in Berlin.⁴⁶

Compared to the popularity the Croatian Catholic Mission's activities enjoyed,⁴⁷ the Yugoslav state had a rather hard time pursuing any centrally planned cultural policy whatsoever. While this partly seems to have been a deliberate outcome of a policy encouraging (guest-) worker's self-management,⁴⁸ state representatives, however, started to query full autonomy. The Yugoslav state, therefore, also began to be concerned with social assistance and sought for support by the German *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (AWO).⁴⁹ This was perceived as an imperative given both the lack of pastimes as well as in order to combat gambling⁵⁰ and in order to provide alternatives to the *Bahnhof* (train station) that became a popular venue to meet each other and to exchange news and information.⁵¹ Additionally, state representatives started to realize that the "temporary stay" turned out to be more durable as they initially thought. Establishing a more coordinated information policy that

⁴³ Annual Statistical Yearbook of Berlin's Statistisches Landesamt (1975-1988). It must be taken into account here that this number does not include those who have applied and been granted a German passport, although until the 1990s this was practically possible only for persons married to Germans or whose one parent (for a long period of time, this was only the father) was a German citizen. The legal basis with regard to German citizenship changed in favor of residents of non-German origin only in the course of the 1990s and finally in 2000.

⁴⁴ Lipovčan, Srećko (1998): Kulturni rad Hrvata u Berlinu. In: Društvena istraživanja 7, pp. 147-169, here: p. 148.

⁴⁵ On this issue, see: Buchenau, Klaus (2002): Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien, 1945-1991. Ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich. Phd-Diss. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, pp. 306-309; see also: Thränhardt, Dietrich; Winterhagen, Jenni (2012): Der Einfluss der katholischen Migrantengemeinden auf die Integration südeuropäischer Einwanderergruppen in Deutschland. In: Oltmer, Jochen; Kreienbrink, Axel; Sanz-Dies, Carlos (eds.): Das „Gastarbeiter“-System. Arbeitsmigration und ihre Folgen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Westeuropa. München: Oldenbourg Verlag, pp. 199-215, here: p. 213.

⁴⁶ For a more comprehensive account, see: Thaden, Matthias (2014): Berichte von der „bauštela duha“. Die kroatische katholische Mission in Berlin zwischen Seelsorge und Identitätsstiftung. In: Südosteuropäische Hefte 3 (1), pp. 44-66. Having said that, in the Berlin based „Berliner Morgenpost“ it is indicated that as early as 1969 a Serbian-Orthodox community has also been founded in order to provide services for the 2.000 Serbs living in the city. Cf. Berliner Morgenpost, December 24, 1969.

⁴⁷ At least, this was indicated by the lively memories of Pater G. that, of course, are by no means "objective" howsoever.

⁴⁸ See for example: Ivanović, Vladimir (2013): „Nostalgija za prugom“. Das Freizeitverhalten jugoslawischer Gastarbeiter in der BRD und in Österreich. In: Grandits, Hannes; Sundhaussen, Holm (eds.): Jugoslawien in den 1960er Jahren. Auf dem Weg zu einem (a-)normalen Staat? Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, pp. 135-155.

⁴⁹ Haberl, Othmar Nikola (1978): Die Abwanderung von Arbeitskräften aus Jugoslawien. Zur Problematik ihrer Auslandsbeschäftigung und Rückführung. München: Oldenbourg Verlag, p. 120.

⁵⁰ Baković (2012), p. 30.

⁵¹ This has been vividly illustrated by Ivanović (2013), p. 148.

was capable of reinforcing and retaining a sense of Yugoslav belonging abroad was thus increasingly considered necessary.⁵² To that end, in 1972 and 1973 two “Culture- and Information centres” were launched in Stuttgart and Köln.⁵³ While those were primarily set up to provide Yugoslav clubs with political material as well as to assist them logistically, they also represented an attempt to maintain guest worker’s ties to a Yugoslav cultural space.⁵⁴ In Berlin, it was the Yugoslav military mission that attempted to coordinate the activities of autonomous clubs⁵⁵ in order to prevent them from gradually “tavernising”, which was generally feared.⁵⁶ From 1978 it also set up language classes that were held for guest worker’s children in the premises of AWO’s “recreational home for Yugoslav employees” in Berlin-Moabit.⁵⁷ This place also functioned as a training place for the Yugoslav pioneer organization. While Lipovčan has erroneously stated that no genuine cultural policy was actually allowed to be pursued,⁵⁸ this institution, according to the information gathered for Berlin’s city council by Hartmut Topf, also served as a meeting point for both the 1970-founded Yugoslav club “Edvard Kardelj” as well as for several folklore-groups. It furthermore hosted movie-nights on weekends as well as occasional festivities.⁵⁹ The Berlin based social worker Stijepo Pavlina concedes that the club predominantly served as a meeting point for Serbian migrants⁶⁰ thereby corresponding with Topf’s data indicating an organization along national and regional lines that informed club-founding in Berlin.⁶¹ It would, however, be premature to assume that there was no appeal at all emanating from Yugoslav institutions as self-organization along national lines did not necessarily run counter Yugoslavia’s state philosophy but rather emphasized its federative self-understanding as codified in the 1974 constitution.⁶² On the one hand this holds true for the simultaneity of Berlin’s extremely popular all-Yugoslav football-league (most often referred to as “*Jugoliga*”) that was admittedly linked to “Edvard Kardelj”⁶³, though coinciding with clubs that sometimes were nationally defined. On the other it was musical events, namely concert-tours through the FR Germany featuring artists from Yugoslavia that enjoyed high reputation among guest workers. While it was not until recently that guest worker’s entertainment received broader attention, there have been some attempts to engage in this topic throughout the last years. Initially the tours were organized primarily by

⁵² Baković (2012), p. 41.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 36.

⁵⁴ In this context, Novinščak also mentions editions of “*Vjesnik*” and “*Oslobođenje*” particularly issued for guest workers. Cf. Novinščak (2008), pp. 137–139.

⁵⁵ Topf, Hartmut (1987): *Jugoslawen in Berlin. Neu-Berliner mit Liebe zur alten Heimat*. Berlin: Ausländerbeauftragter des Senats, p. 22.

⁵⁶ Baković (2012), p. 29.

⁵⁷ Topf (1987), p. 22.

⁵⁸ Lipovčan (1998), p. 152.

⁵⁹ Topf (1987), pp. 25–26.

⁶⁰ Rossig, Rüdiger (2008): *Ex-Yugos. Junge MigrantInnen aus Jugoslawien und seinen Nachfolgestaaten in Deutschland*. Berlin: Archiv der Jugendkulturen, p. 85.

⁶¹ Topf (1987), p. 23.

⁶² For a very accessible, yet comprehensive discussion of this matter, see: Jović, Dejan (2009): *Yugoslavia: A State that Withered Away*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, pp. 62–93. However, Goodlett mentions a letter printed in *Borba*, in which Tito warns the representatives of a Serbian migration centre abroad not to forget the ideals of *brotherhood and unity* not tolerating nationalist activities of any kind. See: Goodlett, David E. (2007): *Yugoslav Worker Emigration 1963–1973. Government Policy and Press Coverage*, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, p. 127.

⁶³ Topf (1987), p. 25.

national radio stations from 1972, whereas later on the Yugoslav government – corresponding to the mentioned attempt to influence cultural policy on guest workers – strove to get these under its thumb by both granting organization-permissions only to “reliable organisers” as well as institutionalizing a quota on artists’ national representation. The centralization of concerts both caused their increased success as well as it paved the way for musicians’ arguments that could back their claims on appearance with reference to their national belonging.⁶⁴ Notwithstanding this, concerts by Yugoslavian artists can be considered to have been resoundingly successful. Ivanović even believes that they did a good job creating a “shared ethnic identity” by virtue of connecting guest workers to their country of origin while they were simultaneously differing from the people there.⁶⁵ With the aid of the newly founded information centres it was the autonomous clubs that hosted the concerts thereby reaching for a big audience.⁶⁶

In Berlin, for instance, the universally known “*Bratstvo i jedinstvo*”, situated at Potsdamer Straße and run by *Gazda* Huso served as a prominent location for such concerts regardless of visitor’s national belongings, while simultaneously being a well-recognized institution far beyond the city limits.⁶⁷ Beyond these smaller concerts hosted by venues such as the „*Bratstvo i jedinstvo*” or “*Rujna Zora*”, there were also occasional ones taking place in bigger halls and starring famous singers and bands from all Yugoslavia. By then, events of these kinds were seldomly, if ever, organized by locals. It was the Yugoslav state who was in charge for booking tours all over Germany giving guest workers the opportunity to listen to illustrious names such as Šaban Šaulić, Vera Matović, Ivo Robić or Mišo Kovač but also to rock-groups like Azra, Leb i Sol and Bijelo Dugme. As mentioned above and as one of our interlocutors conceded, these concerts also served the purpose for “making the people of Yugoslavia stick together.”⁶⁸

Refugees and *gastarbeiter*. Constructing dichotomies and notions of legitimate culture

Gastarbeiter have often been considered as representatives of a rural culture qua origin, being thus stylized – sometimes more, sometimes less implicit – as an antithesis to an alleged Europeanized and urban everyday culture prevalent in Yugoslavia. Ultimately, this approach is based on an extension of the aforementioned argument put forward by Simić on cities’ ruralisation due to peasants flooding them during urbanization processes.⁶⁹ It is precisely this social background that is often assigned to guest workers leading to a somewhat homogenizing assessment of “their” habits and cultural preferences. In this sense, for instance, Baković bluntly states, that due to their origin guest workers from Yugoslavia preferred NCFM – a musical genre that according to some scholars was even reliant upon

⁶⁴ Baković (2012), pp. 80–87.

⁶⁵ Ivanović (2013), p. 51.

⁶⁶ This can be assumed due to the apparent popularity as is indicated by the persons interviewed by Antonijević et al. See: Antonijević, Dragana; Bašić, Ana; Krstić, Marija (2011): *Gastarbajteri – iz svog ugla. Kazivanja o životu i socio-ekonomskom položaju gastarbajtera*. In: *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* 6, pp. 983–1011, here: p. 990.

⁶⁷ In our interview Mate told us that he had known this place even before coming to Berlin in 1989.

⁶⁸ Interview with Mate.

⁶⁹ Simić, Andrei (1973): *Peasant Urbanites: a study of rural-urban mobility in Serbia*. New York: Seminar Press. This book features prominently in Gordy’s seminal discussion of Serbia in the 1990’s. See: Gordy (1999), p. 107.

their revenue⁷⁰ for it was particularly them who according to Ivanović lacked of any significant demand for “high culture”.⁷¹ This is further discussed by Predrag Marković who also traces the *Gastarbeiters’* affinity to NCFM, connecting this matter to stereotypes within Yugoslav society. He even deems guest workers a “visible social type, [and] a symbol” revealing a rather disdainful attitude they were met with.⁷² While we neither aim to prove this view wrong nor right, we, however, consider it necessary to state that it draws a stereotype-laden and homogenizing picture of an alleged prototypical guest worker as opposed to urban elites within Yugoslavia. This picture, furthermore, seems to neatly correlate with the official position towards guest workers as put forward by the Yugoslav state that tried to fight “wrong representations of Yugoslav culture”⁷³ abroad. As this music allegedly undermined modernization-efforts, the state tried to offer alternatives to the apparently dominating NCFM by introducing classical music into concert programs, thus aiming to promote “high culture” among guest workers.⁷⁴

The clear-cut opposition between “high” vs. “low culture” with the guest worker and their supposed penchant for NCFM clearly embodying the latter becomes most apparent in Ivanović’s and Marković’s account on *Gastarbeiter’s* everyday life. By drawing on arguments of the aforementioned Gordy, they even refer to a genuine „counterculture of the guest workers” that led to a “victory of the outlaws”.⁷⁵ The authors thus introduce a negative foil that ideally serves to contrast a supposedly self-contained “urban Yugoslav culture” vis à vis the purported “counter-culture”.

Supposedly superior with regard to their musical taste it was an ever increasing number of Yugoslav refugees from the early 1990s onwards that brought about another dichotomy with regard to *Gastarbeiter’s* everyday-culture. Unsurprisingly, when the economic and political tensions in the former Yugoslavia increased, neither Germany nor Berlin remained unaffected by this development: While it was already almost 35.000 Yugoslav citizens living in the city in 1990, some 7.000 more were registered the year later rising up to 78.000 in 1995, thus constituting 18,1% of Berlin’s migrant population.⁷⁶ As Pascal Goeke argued quite convincingly they usually utilized already established familial or personal ties, thus

⁷⁰ Ivanović, Vladimir; Marković, Predrag (2011): Der späte Sieg der Gartenzwerge. Ökonomie- und Kulturtransfer durch die „Gastarbeiter“? Jugo-Serbische Fallbeispiele. In: Brunnbauer, Ulf, Novinščak, Karolina, Voß, Christian (eds.): Gesellschaften in Bewegung. Emigration aus und Immigration nach Südosteuropa in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. München: Otto Sagner, pp. 125–148, here: p. 147.

⁷¹ Ivanović (2013), p. 51.

⁷² Marković, Predrag (2006): Verloren in der Transmigration? Der Einfluss der serbischen ‚Gastarbeiter‘ auf das Alltagsleben in Serbien. In: Roth, Klaus (ed.): Arbeitswelt, Lebenswelt. Facetten einer spannungsreichen Beziehung im östlichen Europa. Münster: LIT Verlag, pp. 239–256, here: p. 242.

⁷³ Baković (2012), p. 95.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 93–95. This went synchronous to discussions of “proper musical tastes” in Yugoslavia. Interestingly enough, Dean Vuletić points to Western perceptions as a significant contribution to the attitudes held by parts of cultural and political elites in Yugoslavia. We should therefore keep in mind not to treat musical discourses in Yugoslavia entirely internalistic. See: Vuletić, Dean (2010): European Sounds, Yugoslav Visions. Performing Yugoslavia at the Eurovision Song Contest. In: Luthar, Breda; Pusnik, Marusa (eds.): Remembering Utopia. The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia. Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, pp. 121–144, here: p. 132. In a somewhat similar vein Đurković considers Yugoslav rock music to have primarily been utilized by a “progressive communist elite” as a source of legitimation. See: Đurković (2002), p. 23.

⁷⁵ Ivanović; Marković (2011), p. 145.

⁷⁶ Annual Statistical Yearbook of Berlin’s Statistisches Landesamt (1990-1995).

conveying an interdependency of economic and war-related migrations.⁷⁷ According to both Marković and Ondřej Daniel the refugees' composition can be considered to have differed from the guest workers as they primarily consisted of students and white-collar employees.⁷⁸

Although references to social stratification are a somewhat vague enterprise with regard to scarce source-material, the distinction between *Gastarbeiter* and refugees in economic terms apparently corresponds to a more general tendency, that is, to draw a boundary between them and to accuse the former of philistinism. This, for instance, becomes obvious in Hanna Marquardt's ethnological account on (former) Yugoslav citizens living in Berlin during the wars, for she entirely adopts her interviewees' perspective. All her interlocutors that mostly arrived here either shortly before or during the wars position themselves in stark contrast to guest workers. Referring to *Gastarbeiter* and especially their children ("*Gastarbeiterkinder*") in a rather derogative way by implying that they utterly lacked of "culture", they present themselves as culturally superior.⁷⁹ Rüdiger Rossig takes a somewhat similar line by engaging with persons belonging to an "Ex-Yugo"-community to what extent howsoever. While it remains more or less obscure whom he actually refers to when using this term, he in any case focuses on refugees' stories, primarily of those mourning after the former Yugoslavia considering themselves as sort of a cultural vanguard.⁸⁰ The stories of those that used to live in Germany as *guest workers* are largely absent with two exceptions, which, however, rather prove this rule as they deliberately distance themselves to the aimed *Gastarbeiter*-narrative, that is, a rather simple minded, rural and nouveau riche.⁸¹

These dichotomous views towards high and low culture embodied by the guest worker-refugee dichotomy correlate with approaches to turbofolk sketched above. Not surprisingly, it is precisely the guest workers who are often accused of having been prone to that sort of music. Stretching this argument even further according to their premise of a guest worker's "counter-culture", other authors stated that the *Gastarbeiters'* idols (that is, the turbofolk-stars) eventually managed to "hillbilly" (*verdorft trampeln*) the Balkans.⁸²

Furthermore and notwithstanding those considering contacts abroad as a main pillar to keep this music going,⁸³ it is quite astonishing how turbofolk is often mentioned in the same breath with guest worker's supposed "nationalization". In this respect, Rossig's interlocutors repeatedly link *Gastarbeiters'* becoming subject to nationalist agitation with their musical

⁷⁷ Goeke, Pascal (2007): Transnationale Migrationen. Post-jugoslawische Biografien in der Weltgesellschaft. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, p. 124. For Berlin this is indicated by personal accounts given by female Bosnian refugees. See: (1993) Heimatlos. Emigrantinnen aus dem ehemaligen Jugoslawien. Begleitbuch zur gleichnamigen Wanderausstellung des Frauenladens der AWO und der Otto-Suhr-Volkshochschule Neukölln. Berlin, p. 64.

⁷⁸ Daniel, Ondřej (2007): Gastarbajteri. Rethinking Yugoslav Economic Migrations towards the European North-West through Transnationalism and Popular Culture. In: G. Ellis, Steven; Klusáková, Lud'a (eds.): Imagining frontiers, contesting identities. Pisa: Edizioni Plus, pp. 277–302, here: p. 281. cf. Marković (2006), p. 246.

⁷⁹ Marquardt, Hanna (2008): Ein „Eigenes Jugoslawien“ in Berlin? Positionierungen und Zugehörigkeitserzählungen von Berliner Migrantinnen. M.A.-Diss. Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, pp. 83–88.

⁸⁰ Rossig (2008), pp. 103, 143.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 87, 151–152.

⁸² Ivanović; Marković (2011), p. 148.

⁸³ Dika, Antonia; Jeitler, Barbara; Krasny, Elke; Širbegović, Amila (eds.) (2011): Balkanmeile. Ottakringer Straße. 24 Stunden. Ein Reiseführer aus Wien. Lokale Identitäten und globale Transformationsprozesse. Wien: Turia + Kant.

preferences.⁸⁴ While they in the course of this agitation are supposed to have neatly separated along “ethnic” lines,⁸⁵ the refugees on the other hand were more likely to resist the seductions of hatred.⁸⁶ Not to mention the problems that accompany such generalizations, the role of music becomes somewhat ubiquitous in this discussion as it often serves as a primal signifier of political affiliations as has been already elaborated. Rossig proves to be an adherent of that view as he implicitly upholds Gordy’s clear-cut distinction of “turbashi” and “rokeri”⁸⁷ extending this culture/musical boundary to Berlin by projecting it onto *Gastarbeiter* and refugees. Marquardt even carries further this perspective for she considers the refugees’ *anti-nationalism* to have substituted for the nationalist tendencies prevalent on the part of guest workers.⁸⁸ In this light, the rejection of rock music that purportedly was ever so popular among refugees is not just a mere matter of personal taste, but rather serves as a *habitus* that allegedly set apart two groups from one another.⁸⁹ While we do by no means deny that musical preferences are linked to social fields and *habitus*,⁹⁰ it is on the one hand the essential notion of two groups supposedly recognizable by musical taste, and on the other, it is the prevalence of what Darko Delić has labeled as “cultural racism”⁹¹ that we encountered quite frequently throughout prior research. In this vein, both guest workers and turbofolk-listeners are widely considered as paragons of primitivity and nationalism.⁹²

Doing fieldwork: Music, evening entertainment and (changing) group belongings in early 1990s Berlin

Apart from the dichotomies sketched in the preceding chapters, ranging from clearly cut distinctions between guest workers and refugees as well as from high to low culture, we rather attempt to treat turbofolk as a musical product defying any definite attribution in terms of class or national belonging⁹³ blurring even more when analyzing its appropriation outside of Yugoslavia.⁹⁴ While the music’s change in meaning has already been sketched

⁸⁴ This is most clearly stated by the “Balkanizer”, aka D. Rabrenovic, who criticized the “Gastarbeiterkinder’s” affinity for going to the respective nationalist clubs in order to listen to turbofolk there. Rossig (2008), pp. 153–155.

⁸⁵ This apparent easiness also shines through Novinščak’s argumentation, in which the ways of Croatian *Gastarbeiter* becoming “Diaspora-Croats” remain somewhat untold. See: Novinščak (2008), p. 142.

⁸⁶ Rossig (2008), pp. 72, 143–144.

⁸⁷ These terms have even made their way into one of Gordy’s articles’ headlines. See: Gordy, Eric (2000): *Turbaši and Rokeri* as Windows into Serbia’s Social Divide. In: *Balkanologie. Revue d’études pluridisciplinaires* 4, available online at <http://balkanologie.revues.org/index774.html>, accessed June 16, 2013.

⁸⁸ Marquardt (2008), pp. 79–80.

⁸⁹ This dichotomous view on music within 1990s Yugoslavia with special attention to the ones capable of (re-) producing it, has been tackled very plausibly in: Tomić (2014), pp. 143–155.

⁹⁰ Bourdieu, Pierre (1989): *Social Space and Symbolic Power*. In: *Sociological Theory* 7, pp. 14–25, here: pp. 19–21.

⁹¹ Delić, Darko (2012): *Kritika kritike turbofolka: smrtonosni sjaj Koka-kole, Marlboro i Suzukija u doživljaju domaće liberalne elite*, available online at <http://teorijaizteretane.blogspot.de/2012/02/kritika-kritike-turbofolka-smrtonosni.html>, accessed September 2, 2013.

⁹² This view is encapsulated by Daniel who asserts that turbofolk, in fact, mirrored *Gastarbeiters’* world view as well as “their” dreams of “fast cars, nice girls, luxury fashion.” See: Daniel (2007), p. 288.

⁹³ This position has already been elaborated by Milojević who considers turbofolk as a musical example of postmodernism. Cf. Milojević, Jasmina (2013): *Turbofolk. World Music ili postmoderni Vavilon?* Available online at http://jazzymcoyu.page.tl/Turbo_folk.htm?PHPSESSID=75247554331878cd2d2279f3237dd612, accessed August 7, 2013.

⁹⁴ Fischer (2005), pp. 65–68. In a somewhat similar vein, Vidić Rasmussen makes a very interesting point: While she also identifies proximity of newly emerging folk-styles and “guest workers’ tastes”, she, however,

with regard to consumption patterns of Ceca's tunes by Slovenian, Croatian and Bosnian teenagers,⁹⁵ we in the following will try to get a hold on the role that music and especially turbfolk accounted for with regard to processes of identification in Berlin.

For that purpose we conducted interviews with four persons who came to Germany either as guest workers or as refugees having few things in common with regard both to their socialization as well as to the circumstances of their stay.⁹⁶ Gathering the interview material we focused on the period between the late 1980s and early 1990s trying to probe into changes our interviewees have experienced. We were particularly keen to hear them elaborating on group belonging and self-positioning as well as to investigate whether musical tastes were of any importance to them when reflecting on these issues.

Before our findings will be discussed, two difficulties ought to be addressed that somewhat overshadowed our research. The first one concerns the very basis of anthropologically inspired studies, which is, getting to know adequate people to ask for information. As none of us had any prior experience with the turbfolk scene both in the former Yugoslavia as well as in Berlin we were reliant upon a small range of contact persons. Unfortunately, most of them – despite doing their best to put us into contact with people who might know better – were not able to provide us with valuable contributions to the topic. Hence, we reproduced the very error we initially sought to outdo as we failed to make contact with “die-hard” fans of early 1990s turbfolk talking mostly to persons that were rather critical towards the music's alleged “inferior quality”. The second problem we must address refers to the fact that most clubs and venues that would have existed back in the early 1990s were opened due to the massive influx of refugees. The majority of which were closed on a big scale when people were forced to leave Germany as a result of the deportations from the mid-1996 onwards.⁹⁷ We thus could not see these places ourselves but had to rely entirely on second hand information we received from our informants.

On the one hand this lack of first-hand information by turbfolk “players” surely constitutes a major weakness of this work and should be considered a task for more persistence throughout further studies. On the other hand, however, that grievance somehow proved to be a virtue as all our interviewees were familiar with the term and deliberately related it both to their own musical narratives as well as to the situation in Berlin as was remembered by each of them. Furthermore, the sometimes overt rejections of this music to some extent provoked ambivalent and surprisingly contradictory valuations and classifications. By drawing on the interviews and by clustering them into topic areas we

contextualizes this development with increased musical exchange in western European cities among migrants from various cultural backgrounds. Therefore, popular music within the “diaspora”, she concludes, took different shapes than in Yugoslavia itself. See: Vidić Rasmussen, Ljerka (1996), pp. 104–106, 114–115.

⁹⁵ Cvorovic (2012), pp. 121–137.

⁹⁶ Mate is a 52 year old builder from Slavonski Brod (Croatia) who came to Berlin right before the fall of the wall after having worked in several West-German cities from 1984 onwards. Draško is in his late-30s. He spent half of his childhood in Berlin before his parents returned to Osijek where he grew up as a teenager. Being a Serb himself, he came back to Berlin fleeing the war in 1991. Predrag has about as old as Draško, he also came to Berlin fleeing from military service after having grown up in Belgrade. Dejan came here in 1993 as a Bosnian Serb seeking refuge in Berlin.

⁹⁷ This was indicated by Mate in our interview. Berlin's daily “taz” also covered this subject. See: Die Angst geht um. Beginn der Abschiebung bosnischer Flüchtlinge ist weiter ungewiß (October 11, 1996); Appell gegen Abschiebung bosnischer Flüchtlinge (May 31, 1997). In: die tageszeitung (taz).

attempted to find out whether the approaches that have been criticized throughout the preceding chapters hold true or if engaging with turbofolk can indeed enable us to see other dynamics at work. According to Andreas Wimmer's suggestion that paying attention to specific "events" might serve to avoid reproducing static categories of group belonging,⁹⁸ turbofolk in the early 1990s shall be treated as such an "event" as it provided facility to participate for a variety of actors. We thus intend to take serious Pierre Bourdieu's fundamental notion of music as being "predisposed to symbolize group integration and, by symbolizing it, to strengthen it".⁹⁹

New actors, new places, old loyalties?

As has been already mentioned above, musical entertainment for guest workers had a long tradition and also served political purposes. While according to Mate smaller venues such as pubs and cafés sometimes hosted Yugoslav folk-singers, bigger events like concerts of *Bijelo Dugme* would be put on by the state. Both Mate as well as Draško emphasized that those concerts were visited by people regardless of national affiliations. From the late 1980s, however, new venues gradually emerged resulting in what all of our interviewees refer to as "separation of groups". Had there been rather few explicitly national clubs before, meeting according to "national fault-lines" seems to have taken root in Berlin from the mid/late-1980s onwards.¹⁰⁰ It will be subject for later discussion whether and how these lines could yet be permeated; for now it suffices to note that the large number of refugees corresponded with the establishment of more and more venues that tried to address potential customers primarily with regard to their "national loyalty". While according to Mate, places overemphasizing those sort of belongings have previously had a rather hard time to gain a foothold, the situation started to change: venues such as the "Café Monaco" (there was one at Kreuzberg's Yorckstraße as well as another one in Neukölln), "Café King" or the pub belonging to the Serbian cultural association at Neukölln's Grenzallee cropped up being quite unambiguous with regard to their national connotations as all our interlocutors stressed emphatically. Newly founded clubs and cafés were above all linked to the influx of refugees that lead to a doubling of Berlin's ex-Yugoslav population within some five years only. Mate recalled this situation quite drastically:

M.D.: "It was a catastrophe, honestly! Every time you went for the pub people would ask you: 'You got a Mark? Can you pay a beer for me?' [...] 'Screw it', I thought, when I got to

⁹⁸ Within migration studies Wimmer criticizes a tendency to take for granted stable ethnic categories, thus re-affirming and naturalizing them. Instead of focusing on *relations* between supposedly pre-existing groups, he proposes to observe the *production of boundaries as a social process*. This, in turn, requires a "de-ethnisation of research-designs" which might be achieved by engaging with particular "events". Cf. Wimmer, Andreas (2008): *Ethnische Grenzziehungen in der Immigrationsgesellschaft. Jenseits des Herder'schen Commonsense*. In: Kalter, Frank (ed.): *Migration und Integration*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 57–80, here: pp. 68, 74.

⁹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu (1977): *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge, p. 232, quoted in: Schierup, Carl-Ulrik; Ålund, Alexandra (eds.) (1987): *Will they still be dancing? Integration and Ethnic Transformation among Yugoslav Immigrants in Scandinavia*. Göteborg: Almquist & Wiksell, p. 205.

¹⁰⁰ This is also indicated in an article published in one of Berlin's dailies. See for example: Edler, Silke; Quaiser, Sascha (eds.) (1994): *Freundschaften und Ehen brechen am plötzlichen Patriotismus. Spuren des Balkan-Kriegs*. In: *Der Tagesspiegel*, February 28, 1994. Mate told us that he himself realized first separations in 1988.

know him better, 'I'll pay you beer and schnapps' [...] Lots of pubs opened because of those refugees, you bet."

A.P.: "What kind of people opened these places? Were it people who used to be here before?"

M.D.: "Yes, it was those people who came to Berlin in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many of them used to work on the construction-grounds, they saved quite some money and when the refugees came they just started to run a pub. You just do a little live-music and the pub will be crowded."

A.P.: "But these pubs and clubs – where they like "mixed" places – for Yugoslavs..."

M.D.: "No, no – when the refugees came, it was Bosnians to Bosnians, Serbs to Serbs and Croats to Croats."¹⁰¹

According to this perspective the situation altered from the previous one – clubs and pubs confined to nationally interpreted belongings apparently started to play a decisive role for the organization of both evening entertainment as well as musical events. As Draško put it:

A.P.: "You told us about the concerts, you said that Ceca did shows in Berlin. Who was in charge for the organization of such concerts?"

D.M.: "It was the Serbian clubs. [...] I don't know – there were plenty of clubs. I'm not sure who exactly would have been in charge for this very concert... *Proslava*, that's how they would be called back then."¹⁰²

Acknowledging the fact that our interviewees sometimes (like in this instance) employed and, indeed, adapted to the logics of groups separated by nations, we should, however, not run into the trap of reproducing it.¹⁰³ As has been outlined for the development of turbofolk in the former Yugoslavia, it was the apparent lack of organizational backing that brought to the fore new persons and institutions while simultaneously contributing to the vanishing of others. We suggest, that the same can be argued for Berlin's music-scene – new scopes and new spaces of action opened up for new actors to dislodge the former ones. This development has been captured for the case of Vienna where „Fantom“, aka Fikret Vulačić would raise as one of the main organizers for a concert sphere that he labels "pan-Yugoslav" from 1991 onwards.¹⁰⁴ In Berlin, on the other hand, it was the national clubs that were among the first to detect how concerts could be utilized for their ends. In this respect, they managed to attract thousands of people by offering turbofolk concerts – take Dragana Mirković and Ceca as certainly the most glamorous examples – on a pretty regular basis in a hall close to Alexanderplatz.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Interview with Mate.

¹⁰² Interview with Draško.

¹⁰³ A sound critique towards this approach has been formulated by the aforementioned Brubaker. See: Brubaker (2004), pp. 8–10.

¹⁰⁴ Dermanović, Ivona (2011): *Ethnische Ökonomie am Beispiel des Livemusik-Sektors populärer Balkanmusik in Wien*. Dipl.-Diss. Vienna: University of Vienna, available online at <http://musikwirtschaftsforschung.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/ethnische-c3b6konomie-am-bsp-des-livemusik-sektors-populc3a4rer-balkanmusik-in-wien.pdf>, accessed July 8, 2013, p. 200–201.

¹⁰⁵ We were told about those concerts close to Alexanderplatz by all our interviewees who emphasized that the club organizing them put efforts into drawing a connection between the music and their political purpose.

Furthermore and additionally to the actors organizing turbofolk-concerts and commodifying this music, “national bonds” were not the sole factor for defining newly established venues’ target groups. Instead, gathering according to regional ties was something that on the one hand especially refugees were keen to, on the other it served as an opportunity for people to open up new places when refugees came in vast numbers. This perspective was put forward by Mate who expressed that:

“It’s just normal – it’s wartime. You are from Banja Luka – you go searching for people from Banja Luka. You are from Niš or Belgrade or – wherever – from Kosovo: you go searching for people from your region.”¹⁰⁶

He furthermore gave us an impression of the number of regional clubs that would open back then:

“It was mostly private initiatives. We had a club for Slavonians – Slavonski Brod – as well as for people coming from Lika. We would always pay our membership fees... annually, you know. So we came there every Friday [...]. There was the Croatian community which is now situated at Karl-Marx-Straße, it used to be at Urbanstraße and there was yet another one at Hallesches Tor and at Ku’damm – I knew all of them [...].”¹⁰⁷

Opening and joining “national” clubs was thus not just a matter of “ethnic separation”, as some contemporary newspapers as well as scholarly accounts would like to have us believing, but can also be considered a quest for mutual support on a regional basis.

This being said, the importance of regional ties often laid the foundation of private initiatives. When it comes to musical entertainment they are by no means to be neglected. In Mate’s narrative revolving around activities he pursued himself they played a major role, indeed:

M.D.: “When Croats came to Berlin [in the early 1990s] – well-known singers, you know – it was us who brought them here – Maria, me, Boris, Wojca and Mile... what was the old guy’s name again, the one from Lika – Gordić! He came here, we organized everything ourselves and it was also us who had to pay. It all took place in this hall at Hallesches Tor or down there at Köpenicker Straße – right next to the school, in the ICC-Centre or in the Technical University’s Cafeteria at Ernst-Reuter-Platz. We organized it – with financial aid we would get from the senate. It was cheaper that way.”

A.P.: “And you participated in the organization? How did you manage to make contact to the musicians?”

M.D.: “That was not that difficult. You just go down there [to Croatia]. You will find them by phone. I, for instance, also knew a good band from Slavonia that came to Stuttgart. I just went there by the end of the month and asked them to come. [Mate was born in Lika and moved to Slavonia as a teenager. Before coming to Berlin in 1989, he worked in Stuttgart].”¹⁰⁸

As can be derived from this passage, local ties were of importance to the organization of new venues, entertainment as well as concerts. They, furthermore, constituted a pivotal element

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Mate.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Mate.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

of their promotion. As all our interviewees stressed, there were rather few posters, flyers or other printed material that advertised those concerts. It was more common to have them announced via radio programs for Yugoslav citizens living in Berlin.¹⁰⁹ One of our interviewees pointed to the fact that very big concerts taking place in Germany would even be announced by the respective national broadcasting services. Yet, buzz marketing certainly used to be by far the most effective advertisement-strategy. While on the one hand this circumstance proved to be quite painstaking for ourselves while doing research,¹¹⁰ it accounted for a quite peculiar situation for the contemporaries. Musical events – despite not deliberately addressing hermetically closed national groups – were not prone to attract just anybody as not all potentially interested persons would have even heard about concerts in the first place. Rather, they were communicated in pre-selective circles such as football matches between clubs partaking in Berlin's Croatian soccer-league or the respective pubs, clubs or cafés.

In this respect and following our interlocutors' narratives we can assume an emergence of both new actors as well as of newly founded venues in which music would be played and distributed according to nationally defined boundaries. While we tried to put into context such a view by pointing to somewhat blurring aspects of regionalization, successful commodification strategies employed by actors like the national clubs or the narrow distribution circles of such musical events, there have yet been few comments on the impact of turbofolk. By taking into consideration the perspective our interviewees' expressed towards this style we in the next subchapter shall try to include an actor-centered angle. Interpreting the interviews we attempt to grasp how asserted boundaries were not only *reflected* but also *perpetuated* and/or *permeated* by turbofolk. Hence, dealing with the music will serve as a vehicle to question the very supposition of an inevitable and thorough breakdown of the "Yugoslav community" in Berlin.

Whose turbofolk? Insights on belonging derived from our interviews

During the early 1990s, journalistic accounts on the (Ex-) Yugoslav community in Berlin were rather prone to reproduce the primordialist and instrumentalist positions that by then dominated approaches to the violence in former Yugoslavia. As already mentioned above, we observed a tendency on behalf of our interviewees to tacitly adapt to that logic. This can foremost be discerned from the manner of directly linking the supposed segregations in Berlin to developments within former Yugoslavia. Always feeling the urge to embed their narratives into comprehensive accounts on the causes, casualties and consequences of the war, their definition of what happened in Berlin as sort of an "ethnic disentanglement" often did not require further explanations on their behalf and was portrayed as something "naturally" taking place. This is all the more surprising as none of our interviewees seem to

¹⁰⁹ Since 1976 those were broadcasted by the "SFB – Sender Freies Berlin" for ten minutes each day. Initially disseminated under the name "Sendung für unsere jugoslawischen Mitbürger" it was renamed in 1992 being henceforth called "Berliner Forum". See: "Parteiisch wollen wir sein – für die Opfer". Die serbisch-kroatische Redaktion von Radio Multikulti und der Krieg im ehemaligen Jugoslawien (1995). In: Der Tagesspiegel, August 7, 1995.

¹¹⁰ We consulted several archives without actually succeeding to find usable information about concerts in any printed form.

have been an adherent of any group-logics before. Quite contrarily, all of them pointed to the initial confusion they felt regarding the political vortex in Yugoslavia as well as to their integration within a functioning Yugoslav community in Berlin. Which kind of personal experiences or social expectations, then, caused them to distance themselves and how was this mediated by music and evening activities? We asked Mate why he stopped going out with his fellow builders from Bosnia and Serbia:

M.T.: "How did you get along with your colleagues at work back then?"

M.D.: "It was ok – we could talk in our language you know. But after work, everybody went his own way."

M.T.: "How come?"

M.D.: "How come... You cannot imagine how come?! Down there it's war and we're working here together having fun?! I tell you, there was no more fun on the building ground, no alcohol on the building ground and no more nice words on the building ground. You just go work there for like ten hours, and then: goodbye!"¹¹¹

In this passage a feeling of guilt might be discerned for Mate considers it to have been unacceptable to befriend with somebody who he understands to belong to the "wrong side". This feeling apparently was reinforced when his brother was drafted and he would not hear from him for months. He tries to explain:

M.D.: "You know what, in my family there are Serbs, Croats and Muslims... it was therefore hard for me to understand all that. But when my brother went for war, my heart was on that [the Croat] side... that's pretty normal, isn't it?"¹¹²

This feeling of guilt – apparently also due to the more nationalistically inclined girlfriend he had back then – gave reason to go to places that according to Mate would be visited by Croats only as well as playing:

"[...] mostly our music – with guitar, you know. Music featuring harmonica was mostly from the Serbs – like turbofolk, you know..."¹¹³

While a tendency to separation within musical life was also emphasized by Draško, evening entertainment open to an audience for people regardless of nationality does not seem to have been entirely replaced by nationalized clubs. It was, again, Mate, who in his sometimes contradictory account emphasized the fact that he *always* went to those places whereas on other occasions he would openly deny of having done so. He, for instance, vividly recalled a place named "Rujna Zora" at Berlin Schöneberg's Hauptstraße. According to him, the place was very welcoming to a "Yugoslav" public until it closed in the late 1990s:

M.D.: "Rujna Zora was yet another "Yugo-pub" having live-music every weekend."

A.P.: "And how was it there during the war, did it remain a Yugoslav place?"

M.D.: "Yes, and it was great. Everything went normal. Many people came... drinking and stuff. Sometimes, when somebody had too much they would fight – but this didn't happen that often."

¹¹¹ Interview with Mate.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

A.P.: “And you said that they hosted concerts there as well?”

M.D.: “Yes, musicians from all over the former Yugoslavia, like Muslimović, Ana Bekuta, Zorica Marković...”¹¹⁴

Mate mentioned yet another concert-venue that he would visit fairly regularly attracting people from all Yugoslav republics – a restaurant owned by a man called Ljubo situated in a street that made way for today’s “Gesundbrunnen-Center” – a big shopping mall in the district of Wedding.

While he had good memories about those places, the famous “Bratstvo i jedinstvo” run by Huso came off rather badly. Mate remembered going to that place quite frequently in his first years in Berlin in order to drink, listen to music and talk with people. Yet, when going there once in 1992 after work in order to have some drinks, he was approached by some people he knew, who exclaimed that “Croats have no place in this pub.” By then, Mate explains, “I realized that I’m better off just staying away.”¹¹⁵ Huso eventually closed his place due to constant fights as Draško regretfully told us. However, he did not draw any connections to “national”, “ethnic” or “political” fault-lines. Rather, he explained us quite convincingly:

“There always used to be troubles – *narodna muzika*, alcohol, fights, shootings – it would always take place there. But now, there was the constant danger for these things becoming political. While it was a personal matter before – ‘you’re going on my nerves’; ‘you insulted me’ or whatever – so, while it was something between *me* and *you* [dir] before, it turned into something between *you* [euch] and *us* now.”¹¹⁶

Afterwards, however, he again employs the notion of fixed groups by asserting:

“By 1991 the Croats had already seceded, it already started before the war [...]. You know, it all went analogous – what took place down there also happened up here. You listen to news, you know – it’s about identification”¹¹⁷

Yet recalling Mate’s story and considering the fact that even in 1992 he still seemed to have enjoyed being at Huso’s, we assume this alleged determinisms of group belonging not to hold true necessarily. If the incident would not have happened and if these people would not have been there this very evening, Mate might not have ended up leaving. Hence, the logic of belonging to *only one group* was not only facilitated by the war and the ferocious events and their broadcasting itself but also by being involuntarily driven into it by people that would have approached you in Berlin.

National separation, we suggest, was not as self-evident as our interlocutors sometimes put it but it was also due to changes within social interactions in Berlin. This is further underlined by the fact that despite following and reaffirming the logics of national groups they sometimes deliberately referred to behaviours and expectations undermining this very logic. This, for instance, can be followed from their assurance that it would not have caused any problems for them to accept anybody from the “other side”, but that it was rather

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Draško.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

“them” worsening the situation by not accepting “us” culminating in what they perceived as national segregations. In this vein, Draško told us:

“Let me put it this way, with the Croats, it was like: ‘we do not want any Serb at all’, whereas with the Serbs it was rather like: ‘if you’re ok, we’re also fine with you’ [...] ok, it was not as if the others came to us in shoals [...] but if you brought somebody, this would not have caused any troubles at all.”¹¹⁸

Similarly, though representing a “Croatian” point of view, being asked what would have happened if some Serbs had showed up at one of the concerts he organized with his friends, Mate answered:

“Nothing would have happened at all, but it never happened – I never heard of such a thing. We did not have any police or anything – everybody was free to join.”¹¹⁹

Despite not being explicitly uninvited, most people, however, seem to have known where *not* to go. Seemingly, this situation was interpreted that way particularly with regard to turbofolk. As we already mentioned above, our interviewees – even without our explicit demand – felt the need to position themselves to this sort of music or – as Draško termed it – to “that kind of anti-quality that has been pushed into society”. Mate makes clear his point with regard to turbofolk most drastically when stating that this music was played only in Serbian clubs where he never went in the early 1990s, but on the other hand bluntly saying that playing Ceca at one of Café Monaco’s boozy nights would have caused “dead people”. And also Draško leaves little space for ambiguities when he refers to nationalism and turbofolk-stars Ceca and Dragana Mirković in the same breath:

D.M.: “Yes, this [concerts organized by the Serbian club] started off from the early to the mid-1990s. Until Dayton it worked out like that – you beautifully mobilize the people according to the national cause [...]”¹²⁰

Turbofolk and national solidarity: What kind of dance partners?

Notwithstanding these definite statements that evoke a nationally uniform picture, turbofolk in Berlin and the symbolic meaning it carried seem to be far more nuanced and ambiguous. While our interviewees willingly acknowledged that lots of musical events were symbolically and nationally laden with the along coming side-effects sketched throughout the preceding pages, turbofolk apparently featured ambivalences that call for further elaboration. Qualifying the statement above, Draško also emphasized a principal candour towards other “nationalities” on such events:

“It was ok [to bring Croatian acquaintances], it was no brotherhood and unity anymore though... on the other hand, the common theme did not vanish entirely. That was even the case with those radical turbofolk-guys.”¹²¹

We unfortunately failed to ask what he exactly meant by “radical-turbofolk-guys”. However, this example illustrates, that concerts of turbofolk stars must not solely be classified as

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Mate.

¹²⁰ Interview with Draško.

¹²¹ Ibid.

“Serbian”. This is further elucidated in a passage from the interview we conducted with Mate:

A.P.: “Did you listen to Ceca as well?”

M.D. [having a sly look on his face]: “Yes, I also did.”

A.P.: “I heard that she played a concert in Berlin in the early 1990s. Would you have ever visited such a concert?”

M.D.: “I *went* to see her! Brena [Lepa Brena] as well. I’m going to that concert – screw it! You’re going to a concert – for me this has nothing to do with politics or religion, I love the music, so I go there. When the Beatles are coming tomorrow, I’ll be going there as well.”¹²²

In spite of the Beatles being certainly not as symbolically charged as Ceca was back then Mate with this statement demonstrates that Ceca’s concerts did not necessarily carry intrinsic nationalism and that it was by no means impossible for him to go there. Yet the emphasis he put on the belief that music and politics are not to be conflated hints to the fact that there probably *were* people who might have drawn this connection. Furthermore, the look he gave us when answering the question suggests the assumption that he might well have been aware that listening to Ceca and going to her concerts could have posed a transgression of boundaries. This is partly implied in the following sentences:

A.P.: “But would this music be played in the Croatian clubs?”

M.D.: “Not in those times, no. It was not forbidden back then but we just didn’t want to listen to this music. At that time I was in the Croatian community pretty often – we would rather listen to our own music. But every now and then, when you’re a little drunk, you know...the Folk comes out.”

A.P.: “Ceca as well?”

M.D.: “Ja, ja.”¹²³

While at the first sight we are confronted with a quite surprising rejection of the aforementioned statements of having “loved” Ceca’s music, it is above all the context that seems to have accounted for the differing assessments. Whereas listening to turbofolk was certainly not appreciated in the Croatian clubs where it was – if ever – turned on when everyone was drunk already, it was to some extent perfectly fine to enjoy it more or less regardless of nationality on concerts in big halls.

Interpreting turbofolk as a mutually accepted dance-music staged in places supposedly uncontaminated by politics was a recurrent theme throughout the narratives of many persons we talked with. This holds true for Dejan who after fleeing Bosnia in 1993 initially kept some distance to everyone and everything connected to former Yugoslavia but nevertheless in the mid-1990s visited a Ceca concert. According to his remarks, the music was not related to anything but entertainment. His view might have some particular

¹²² Interview with Mate.

¹²³ Ibid.

importance considering the fact that he was one of the organizers of Đorđe Balašević's first concert in Berlin after the war.¹²⁴

The blatant connection of turbofolk and national affiliations was also doubted by Draško, who told us:

„Well, actually, we were rather participating in those rock and alternative circles but we certainly went to *narodne proslave*. You would find more girls there compared to the alternative-parties...and the more beautiful ones as well. And then you just go there listening to *narodna muzika* [loud laughter].“¹²⁵

Mate put it in a similar way, stating that:

M.D.: “With some of those [turbofolk] songs you can have more fun – you can dance, you can sing. You can just have more fun. When you are, like, a little bit drunk – it's just like playing Doors or Beatles here [the venue we met].”

A.P.: “So you cannot derive from the fact that somebody listens to turbofolk that he is a nationalist?”

M.D.: “No, not at all. It had nothing to do with being a nationalist.”¹²⁶

All these statements seriously put into question a direct link between turbofolk and nationalist sentiments, but suggest the opposite: turbofolk apparently rather embodied an ongoing possibility of sharing a good time with young, attractive and party-prone people from all former Yugoslavia.

“‘Turbashi’ vs. ‘rokeri’”? Unraveling “Gordyan knots” in Berlin

The passages just quoted also point to the aforementioned differences that have been sketched throughout the preceding chapters, that is, the supposed dichotomy between “rokeri” and “turbashi” transporting political opinions via musical tastes.

It is interesting to observe that also in everyday-life identifications Draško recalled the importance musical preferences exhibited and which kind of values were supposed to be related to them. Offering an interpretation of societal changes in Serbia that bears close similarities to Gordy's position, Draško drew the connection between “village-people” and turbofolk:

D.M.: “Turbofolk is sort of a defeat of the intellectuals. For me, this is the real defeat. [...] Be it *narodna muzika* or turbofolk – previously it used to be *real narodna muzika*, with turbofolk it became different, but it always were the same people listening to this kind of music.”

M.T.: “And who would have been these people in Berlin?”

¹²⁴ Referring to the review article by Rossig, Đorđe Balašević can be considered a musical paragon of Yugoslavism embodying a “melancholy of a bygone unity”. See: Rossig, Rüdiger (2002): Verblässende Verbundenheit. In: taz. die tageszeitung, 9 April, available online at <http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/?id=archivseite&dig=2002/04/09/a0136>, accessed August 31, 2013.

¹²⁵ Interview with Draško.

¹²⁶ Interview with Mate.

D.M.: “Here, it was the working people, the villagers – it was them who went abroad [...]. Those who were unemployed down there.”¹²⁷

Notwithstanding the fact that we have serious doubts concerning the causal explanation of unemployment and poverty causing migration, it is interesting to hear Draško heavily borrowing from the idea of turbofolk constituting a reflection of a narrow minded “village-mentality”, which he, of course, does not attribute to himself, as he:

“[...] would always hang out with people of all nationalities. It was above all this rock and alternative scene that served as sort of a proof that you did not have anything against anybody [...].”¹²⁸

Interestingly enough, though, and partially relativising this initial statement he a couple of sentences later admitted that:

“[...] at least you had to *pretend* that you didn’t have anything against anybody.”¹²⁹

While with this confinement he himself put into question the alleged cosmopolitanism and open-mindedness that accounted for the “rokeri’s” principal distinction from the “folkies” it was also Mate’s statement that raised our doubts about it. Claiming to be a fan of old-style rock music such as Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones or the Doors, thus being a prime example of what according to Gordy could be labelled a “rocker”, Mate nevertheless went to see turbofolk-stars on a quite regular basis. He by no means conceived of turbofolk as a reflection of any subordinate forms of belonging – be it national – as has been already queried above – or socio-cultural. Predrag for his part, although making jokes about the “trash” epitomized by turbofolk and its lyrics, also rejected the idea of a profound distinction between turbofolk-listeners and those adherent to rock music as well as he seriously doubted any underlying and determining attitude or political sentiments. Assessing turbofolk as a mere entertainment music he simply stated:

“Those who listened to alternative music just listened alternative and those listening to turbofolk listened to turbofolk. Nobody cared about whether and how this affected society. Nobody put too many thoughts in those matters, you know – they just listened to the music they liked.”¹³⁰

Draško encapsulated this point of view by ironically asking “I mean, who gives a damn about music anyway?!” , after explaining to us why going to Ceca’s show in Berlin did not necessarily prompt an unacceptable deviation from considering himself to be a rocker. To put it in a nutshell he widened the binary opposition by just claiming:

“Yea, I like listening to *narodna muzika* and turbofolk. It has to be a good song though. I just listen to the music I like.”¹³¹

Although musical taste is certainly more charged with meaning than Draško and Predrag claim, the stone-set dichotomy of “turbashi” and “rokeri” could not be discerned in our interviewees’ narratives. This opposition firstly introduced by Gordy has been considered a

¹²⁷ Interview with Draško.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Interview with Predrag.

¹³¹ Interview with Mate.

prime signifier of political, social and cultural belongings. We, however, did not come across such distinctions when engaging with that music in Berlin. Rather, it seems that even if our interlocutors were not particularly keen listeners and favoured rock music, rather seldom did we encounter any haughty or arrogant views towards turbofolk and its listeners but quite the opposite: they for entertainment's sake would occasionally visit concerts without considering this to pose a contradiction to their general habits.

“[...] nur irgendwelche nationalistischen Scheißlieder”?¹³² On the dichotomy between *Gastarbeiter* and refugees

While turbofolk has both been assumed to have attracted mostly nationalists as well as it has been often regarded to have constituted a demarcation line between the supposedly cosmopolitan rockers and the rather simple minded “folkies”, a somewhat similar point has been made with regard to the guest workers. Putatively being their main consumers, turbofolk's success has often been linked to refugees' and guest workers' supposedly differing social backgrounds and cultural preferences.

It proved somewhat difficult to give a well-balanced assessment to this question since we must avoid assuming our interviewees' perceptions to be somewhat representative. In any case, however, our findings and interviews do not indicate that distinctions between refugees and guest workers were of such importance with regard to cultural taste. Rather, it should be taken into account the solidarity that, as has been already outlined above, was primarily organized on a regional basis. This was recalled by Barbara John – then-Berlin's servant for the integration of foreign nationals – who remembered the infrastructure that was provided by the nationally defined clubs.¹³³ Bosiljka Schedlich, president and founder of Berlin's “Südost e.V.” also commented on that situation seeing it rather critically:

“Sometimes we had forty doctors, many highly competent specialists among them and lots of architects as well. The guest workers were welcoming them with scorn and derision. It was those people they would have envied being home on holidays. Now – thanks to their money – they could look down upon them [...]. They [the newly founded national clubs, for their part] tried to attract the people with money.”¹³⁴

Having already pointed to the fact that the changing situation brought about new actors we, however, throughout our interviews could not find any of the hostilities or separations that were claimed to have prevailed in Berlin. Draško, for example, neither mentioned huge differences nor did he remember any practices of distinction. It was rather us who would mostly draw the attention to these matters:

D.M.: “[...] sometimes, I went out with the guys from the construction site, you know, they all were from the countryside, only few of them were from the city [...]. I was actually one of the very few coming from the city [he was born and raised in Osijek and Zagreb].”

¹³² Rossig (2008), p. 151.

¹³³ Henneke, Mechthild (1995): Hinter der Fassade brennt tiefer Haß. In: Berliner Zeitung, January 2, 1995, available online at <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/die-voelker-haben-sich-auch-in-der-fremde-getrennt---und-meiden-einander-hinter-der-fassade-brennt-tiefer-hass,10810590,8895744.html>, accessed September 10, 2013.

¹³⁴ Rossig (2008), p. 87.

M.T.: "...so, these were all old guest workers?"

D.M.: "No, no... Most of them were refugees just like me, the majority of them – like 90% – were refugees and they got some work here. And of course I would also go to *Gazda* Huso with them [...]." ¹³⁵

In this passage none of the supposedly striking habitual differences between guest workers and refugees can be discerned. Rather it seems as if the former provided infrastructure for the latter not only in terms of humanitarian aid, but also with regard to music and entertainment. This is indicated by some of Mate's statements:

A.P.: "Where would you meet refugees back then?"

M.D.: "In our pubs, but also in other places scattered all over Berlin. Many of them are closed by now."

A.P.: "In those clubs, was it also guest worker who would come there prior to the refugees' arrival?"

M.D.: "Yes, people that came to Berlin in the late 1960s and early 1970s as well."

A.P.: "So, you also had things to do with the newly arriving persons?"

M.D.: "You know, when you go into a pub... you see old people and then you from one moment to another see new people – many new people. And then you just talk about sports, about music – you know, in our language. And you just make contact with those people [...]." ¹³⁶

Citing these statements in such a detailed way might seem somewhat banal as they merely point to behaviour that one would have expected in the first place. However, with regard to the prevalent tendencies presented above, the perspective presented by the people we talked to is indeed instructive as it does clearly not suggest a distinction between guest workers and refugees with regard to music entertainment. Coming back to turbofolk-concerts, Mate points to the fact that due to the age patterns among refugees, it was rather them who most likely were to be encountered at those kinds of events:

M.D.: "There also was a discotheque, you know – K1, you've heard of that one? [Head-shaking, AP and MT]. It was down there at Anhalter Bahnhof. I know the owner who also tried to engage many groups for concerts. He eventually closed and opened a pub in Wedding."

M.T.: "And at those concerts, would you meet also refugees there?"

M.D.: "It was mainly them who came to these concerts because they mostly were young – between 16 and 30. I'd say it was about 70% of them at these concerts." ¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Interview with Draško.

¹³⁶ Interview with Mate.

¹³⁷ Interview with Mate.

Summary, Conclusion and Prospect

The aim of this paper was to shine a light on dynamics that took place in early 1990s Berlin among former guest workers as well as refugees who came there due to the political developments and the eventual war in Yugoslavia. In so doing, we largely focused on the narratives and perceptions of the four persons we interviewed with regard to their views, opinions and memories concerning their music and entertainment habits. Trying to probe into changes we assumed to have occurred in the early 1990s, we were particularly interested in turbofolk music and its appropriation in Berlin. By also taking into consideration scientific positions on turbofolk that have been put forward throughout the past 20 years as well as scholarly work dealing with *gastarbeiter* from the former Yugoslavia we sought to link and interrelate our findings to an already existent research body. After critically discussing some major assumptions that pervade most of these approaches in the first and second parts and matching them against the perspectives we were confronted with while doing fieldwork in the third section, we will now draw conclusions.

It became apparent that both preoccupations with turbofolk as well as with guest workers' popular culture have so far been dominated by congruent dichotomies. On the one hand this is most distinct with regard to the separation of "high- and low culture" with turbofolk representing the latter. On the other hand, a link between this music and nationalist orientations on behalf of its listeners has frequently been asserted. By drawing the connection between "primitive culture" and "nationalist kitsch" turbofolk could on the one hand superiorly be rejected by those that counted themselves to a better, a *druga Srbija*.¹³⁸ On the other hand, the music has so far been assessed by muting its transnational points of reference, thus favouring a perspective which is solely devoted to Serbia instead.

Comparable dichotomies are also widespread among the reviewed works dealing with guest workers from former Yugoslavia coming to the Federal Republic of Germany. Most often this is accomplished by closely linking their cultural tastes with reference to NCFM to the so called "peasant urbanites" and by considering them of having been immune to "high culture". They are thus homogenized and positioned in stark contrast to those that stayed in Yugoslavia. We also reconstructed the intensification of this view when compared to refugees who, for their part, are equally perceived as a uniform group vis à vis the guest workers. This binary view is, again, realized with reference to cultural tastes and musical preferences as the latter are supposed to have been more "nationalist", which "automatically" made them prone to listen to turbofolk. The refugees, on the other side, are supposed of having followed their "own" musical paths. Hence, the very argument of a "low culture" that is vulnerable, if not even favourable to nationalism as opposed to cosmopolitan "high culture" also dominates the assessment of guest workers and refugees in Germany.

We throughout our research did not identify clearly cut boundaries of this kind. Dealing with turbofolk in Berlin rather made us see ambiguities regarding this music's perception as well as group belongings. Having said that, notions of nationalization that are often merely *stated* and *detected* in journalistic accounts, have also been prevalent throughout our interviewees' narratives. Yet dealing with music and entertainment venues also enabled us

¹³⁸ Tomić (2014), p. 131.

to see other dynamics at work: music consumption and the organization of turbofolk concerts in Berlin not only point to national separation but also to an increase of private initiatives as well as of newly emerging actors commodifying that music. At the same time regional ties grew in importance which affected the concert's promotion.

It would, however, be nothing but foolish to neglect the role nationalisms started to play – both in Yugoslavia as well as in Berlin. Whereas we should not underestimate the influence media from former Yugoslavia imposed on people living here, we nevertheless also should avoid just presuming fragmentations to have “naturally” taken place along ethnic lines. Engaging with music both enabled us to see Yugoslav institutions decreasing while not entirely ceasing to exist whatsoever. The same is true with regard to turbofolk music events that, while on the one hand being charged with negative connotations, they on the other became an occasion where group-belongings did not play such a decisive role. We tried to elaborate on this matter according to the fault lines this music has hitherto been considered to represent. To put it in a nutshell, none of these differences could be encountered with reference to the perspectives put forward by the people we talked with. Rather than signifying any sort of group belonging, all of our interlocutors – being fond of this music or not – primarily mentioned its entertaining aspects. This was even true for Mate who pointed to the fact that while his Croatian club-acquaintances would not have been happy with him turning on this kind of music in the club house, it however was perfectly acceptable to listen to turbofolk in different locations and settings. We also did not encounter anyone sharing Gordy's notion of turbofolk marking a distinct line between some sort of narrow-minded “folkies” as opposed to cosmopolite “rockers”. Rather, we were confronted with people who found this sort of boundary quite alien to their experiences for all of them stated that going to such events did not pose a compromising conflict of interest to them at the time. The same can be said about the alleged differences between guest workers and refugees with regard to music entertainment. Rather than being separated and wary of each other, it was especially the musical landscape that brought them together by having shared venues where people could mingle both quite naturally and regularly.

Based on our research on turbofolk in early 1990s Berlin we recommend being rather careful when projecting asserted “group belongings” from former Yugoslavia to the situation here. It seems that coexistence in a multicultural city did prevent a shared sub-culture from entirely collapsing and that for this development turbofolk indeed played its role. However, our statements must be qualified considering the fact that we only captured some individual views and memories. Gathering more material would thus be necessary which is particularly true with regard to published and pictorial sources, i.e. posters, flyers, photographs, video-material etc. Questions sensitive towards gender-relations and constructions also have been entirely absent in our research. While these aspects have been of major interest to some scholars with regard to turbofolk,¹³⁹ we – partly due to our general difficulties finding suitable contact persons at all – did not succeed in choosing our interviewees with regard to an equal gender ratio. It, however, would be important to include those matters in further

¹³⁹ See for example Kronja, Ivana (2004a): Politics, Nationalism, Music, and Popular Culture in 1990s Serbia. In: Slovo 16, pp. 5–15. Grujić provided a far more sophisticated analysis. See: Grujić (2009), especially Chapters 4–6.

researches as our interlocutors' angles – and hence the perspectives presented here as well – are inherently biased and inevitably male dominated.

During our research we furthermore became increasingly aware of the fact that the boundaries and categories we imposed on people for analytical reasons (i.e. “guest worker”, “refugees”, “Yugoslavs”, “Serbs”, “nationalists”, “rural origins” etc.) not only lack of differentiation but actually constitute acts of symbolic violence. We came to realize that we cannot process people's everyday realities by assigning particular labels to them, even when intending to put those into question. In fact, not only were all of our interlocutors socializing between members of different Yugoslav nations, refugees, guest workers, “turbashi” and “rokeri”, but they certainly were also part of a “mainstream-society” (*Mehrheitsgesellschaft*). Their perceptions of how to deal with the political, social and cultural developments in Yugoslavia as well as their cultural tastes were not only determined by virtue of them belonging to any of the mentioned groups but also influenced by the fact of being confronted with German media and living in a multicultural city like Berlin. Thus, further research needs to take into account not only Berlins (former) Yugoslav cultural landscape but also migrants' integration into German subcultures in order to grasp distinguishing practices in its variety.

With regard to music and its reception it also would be interesting to incorporate questions that take into account this situation by including issues such as exotization and self-exotizations as well as the hybridization of music and its consumption. While these issues have explicitly not been scrutinized throughout this paper, especially Berlin must be considered a major topic for further investigation. This is both true with regard to the appropriation and merging of various “traditional” music styles such as Klezmer, Turkish and Arab pop-music, Hip-Hop and turbfolk-music etc.¹⁴⁰ as well as with negotiations of new forms of Balkan-belonging. As film-director Milan Miletic told us in an interview, it is the internet and a highly hybridized form of “Turbfolk 2.0”¹⁴¹ that succeeded to bring about new patterns of identity formation among teenagers from the former Yugoslavia born and living in today's Berlin.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ This sort of music had its point of departure in the late 1990s operating under the name of “BalkanBeats”. Meanwhile and after meandering through Berlin's, Germany's and Europe's clubs it has been constantly mixed with elements of reggae, latin and ska elements constituting a sort of “world music”. An interesting analysis of this music with regard to its protagonists and their legitimation strategies has been put forward by Brunner and Parzer. See: Brunner, Anja; Parzer, Michael (2011): They say I'm not Balkan – but I am! Die Aneignung “fremder” Musik und ihre Legitimation am Beispiel der Balkanclubszene. In: Reifsamer, Rosa, Fischer, Wolfgang (eds.): „They say I'm different...” Populärmusik, Szenen und ihre Akteur_innen. Wien: Löcker, pp. 155–176.

¹⁴¹ This term was coined by Miletic himself. His movie has not yet been screened. A trailer is available online at <http://www.behance.net/gallery/Turbo-folk-documentary-project/4325701>, accessed September 18, 2013.

¹⁴² We would like to thank Fraser J. Wilson for his proof reading and for helping us avoiding some serious English-errors.

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